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**Roseann Mignone**

EXPLANATION OF MY WORK  
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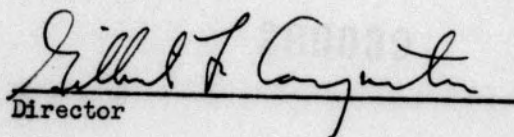
by

Roseann Mignone  
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A Thesis Submitted to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of the University of North Carolina, Greensboro  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Fine Arts

May, 1965

Approved by

  
Director

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis (dissertation) has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, North Carolina.

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MIGNONE, ROSEANN SPINALE. Explanation of My Work. (1965) Directed by:  
Mr. Gilbert Carpenter. pp. 11

The human figure is the primary motif of my work. For me it holds the potential of expressing all facets of the human attitude. The background has become a void from which the figures are emerging. This delineates and strengthens the structural quality of the figure.

The cut out is the most recent development of the latter concept. The cutting away of superfluous background makes the figures' environment and our environment as one. The shape of the canvas made up by the stretcher is part of the composition. Because the figure is not held in by a defined force within the painting, except for the stretcher, it evokes a sense of passing through or forward from a "portal".

The exhibit is of paintings selected to best exemplify the transition within approximately one year.

### Explanation of My Work

The human attitudes expressed through the face and torso are endlessly fulfilling inspirations for my art. They hold the potential for rendering the paradoxical extremes of human nature. The figures are nude, big in scale, timeless and universal. The body is completely important as the environment for what is human. Female nudes have been a primary painting motif in my evolution as a painter. My need is to express them in terms of voluptuous sensuality and rhythm. The male nude is missing for lack of a model.

Background for the figures has consequentially remained an area of after thought. They are themselves the environment. The figure and background are proportioned to the size and shape of the canvas. The first solution of the background was to fill in with white the area remaining after the placement of the figure. This strengthened the delineation of the figure and enhanced the inherent sculptural quality. The figure was thereby given a "void" from which to emerge, an illusion of depth and a suggestion of change. "Nude two", the standing cut out, is a figure which naturally lends itself to the proposition of cutting away the background. Presently, this is my main concern; to do away with the conventional rectangle of the canvas. I am completing a figure seated in a hoop, back view. She is not attached to a stretcher, but is cut out of plywood and hangs freely by an overhead wire in a swing type arrangement.

When developing a figure, I begin with the mid torso and proportion

a subject which is scaled larger than the given width and length of the<sup>2</sup> canvas. The result is a figure with cut off body parts, particularly the limbs. This manner of composition is in itself expressive, and is a consistent element in my work. The latter, combined with the voluptuousness of the figures, elicits a feeling of aggression. The figure size or attitude is not limited by the canvas size. Their world is our world and there is no separation. We are watching them through a "portal" as they spontaneously pass and continue across or out of the canvas. Neither "Flora" (Figure 4) nor "Selena" (Figure 6) need other than the neck, or more importantly, the general pose to suggest the attitude of the face and head. Regardless of the canvas size, the need is there to compose with the same flavor.

"Nude one" (Figure 1) is an early attempt to free the figure from the background with a blank white space. The whiteness cuts out and delineates the nude and also emphasizes its forward positioning. The brush work is small and "busy", however the feeling for structure and form in the figure and the composition is prophetic of more recent works. She is contemplative, haughty, and determined, standing alone in an infinite void.

"Self-portrait" (Figure 2) was painted at approximately the same time as "Nude one". The paint quality is neither consistent, nor finished. Nevertheless, the face does manage to evoke an alive and forcefull quality. It is an uncompromising portrayal, in which facial "pretiness" is not important. On several occassions, this head has reminded observers of Shakespeare's Ophelia.

"Nude two" (Figure 3), which is the cut out, was done entirely in one night long battle. Emotionally, it is linked with the anxiety and

unsettled nature of a female searching for her womanliness. This painting is deceptive in size. The figure usually appears larger than it is. The photographs of my painting clearly show this illusion, which must be derived from the sculptural quality of the figures and the space arrangement of them within the composition. "Nude two" was a natural for the cut out proposition, because of her particularly exciting edges. I was not satisfied with either a dark or light flatness behind her, since both affected the coloring and spontaneity of the figure. This cut out casts a shadow that could belong to a piece of sculpture. Ideally, she should be displayed away from a wall with her shadow participating in the overall effect. The shadow lends a strong dimensional aspect to the work. The stretcher becomes part of the composition and is therefore no longer a border or edge.

"Flora" (Figure 4) was painted after "Nude two" as part of a group of smaller paintings. For this artist, it is desirable to alternate the sizes of paintings. The smaller canvas is a rest after the draining effect of a large work and it also becomes an impetus to later break out onto a large canvas. With this group of paintings, I used a larger brush in proportion to the canvas size and completely eliminated the palette knife as a tool. I've continued to work in this manner, finding it advantageous for expression. I attempted a return to the palette knife and found it most unsuccessful. Amazingly enough the palette knife was used almost exclusively during my first years of painting. "Flora" is bold and simple in technique. There exists a certain consistency in this work between the attitude of the nude and the paint quality.

This past summer (1964) I used larger brushes on large canvasses,



producing as a result, the "Flower" (Figure 5) and "Selena" (Figure 6), the large white nude. I was also introduced to the acrylic media at this time and found it far more satisfactory than oils. The media's fast rate of drying, easily obtained transparency and fluid quality were more in accord with the way I was beginning to approach my work. "Flower", a whimsical work, evolved through numerous underpaintings. It was primarily a decorative and experimental piece to acquaint myself with the acrylic media. Neither the subject matter nor the centered composition are typical, however the brushwork, color and overall feeling would quickly betray it as mine.

"Selena" (Figure 6) was almost completely preconceived, only minor changes taking place during the painting process. A course in Italian Renaissance painting, which I was taking at this time, was a direct source of inspiration. It is an expressionistic interpretation of the classical mode. "Selena" also gives the impression of being larger, because of the styling and positioning of the figure on the canvas. She is huge, but equally vulnerable in her humanity. This painting has been the most complete work from the point of inspiration to the end result. "Portrait of Robert" (Figure 10) is second in this regard.

"Figures I" (Figure 7) is the largest of more recent paintings. It was the impetus for the three final works in the exhibit. The theme is a basic man-woman relationship; "Adam" and "Eve" type. Once again there are extremes in compositional arrangement for expressive purposes. The larger head, being male, is placed completely forward and continuing on. The female torso is cut off on two edges by the canvas and on the third side by the male head. Four planes are set up to achieve the feeling of isola-



tion of the two figures from one another, and to present separate entities of environmental change. These planes are suggested by the white and the green, and also by the placement of the male and female. The white area signifies the infinite past from which they have come, to the area between the green "wall" and the male. The figures create their own area. This is fundamentally the same situation as the one nude theme. An attempt is being made to achieve some sense of an environment of change; transient passing through, without the venture of cutting out the background. This by no means implies that the cut outs are to be eliminated.

A similar relationship, as that in "Figures I" is wrought in the smaller painting, "Figures II" (Figure 8). The positions are exchanged, with the female head largest and placed to the front. The male is black and small and defined in the simplest terms. Although reversed, these figures retain the same attitudes in a new situation as "Figures I". The female head is built up with modeling paste and is comparatively more detailed. She is paradoxical in her real and unreal aspects. This particular painting is the most obvious in eliciting the surrealistic quality present in my work. There is a feeling of aloneness and aloofness, and no defined time or place; yet in some way they are part of the observer's environment.

"La Femmina" is another variation on this type of emerging figure. In this painting the effect depends on an optical illusion created by the black contour line. This line invokes a secondary void within the framework of the larger white void. She is the most "painterly" painted of all the works in the exhibit. The combination of the earth colors and her attitude, lend the torso a soft and fluid grace. Compared to my

other works, this nude is least threatening in her advance. She is extending, rather than determined; proud of her womanliness, rather than bold. So it is with this painting that the female nude in my mind's eye has evolved from "Nude one".

The final painting, "Portrait of Robert" (Figure 10), is of my husband. It was produced at the same time as "La Femmina". The qualities of attitude, composition and paint are consistent with the evolution of my work. There is no attempt to analyze the sitter, but only a presentation of what exists through an individual expression. A delicacy in the play of paint between figure and background lends it a creamy, dream-like visual quality. However, there is nothing lacking in strength emanating from the head. This painting has captured a paradoxical and interchangeable aspect of a beautiful face. The paint application is far superior to "Self-portrait", but the sense of content remains the same.

Note: The photographs are intended to be indications of the thesis exhibit. They do not carry accurately the sense of color, or texture.

## CATALOG

Graduate thesis work exhibited at Weatherspoon Art Gallery, University of North Carolina, Greensboro: January 10-30, 1965.

1. Nude one. January, 1964. Oil.  $15 \times 28\frac{1}{2}$ ".
2. Self-portrait. Winter, 1964. Oil.  $18 \times 24$ ".
3. Nude two. Winter, 1964. Oil.  $5 \times 2\frac{1}{2}$ ".
4. Flora. Spring, 1964. Oil.  $14 \times 40$ ".
5. Flower. July, 1964. Acrylic media.  $5 \times 2\frac{1}{2}$ ".
6. Selena. July, 1964. Mixed media.  $5 \times 3$ ".
7. Figures I. Fall, 1964. Acrylic media.  $3\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{1}{2}$ " (approx.).
8. Figures II. Fall, 1964. Mixed media.  $24 \times 25\frac{1}{2}$ ".
9. La Femmina. Fall, 1964. Acrylic media.  $26 \times 30\frac{1}{2}$ ".
10. Portrait of Robert. Fall, 1964. Acrylic media.  $23 \times 24$ ".





Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

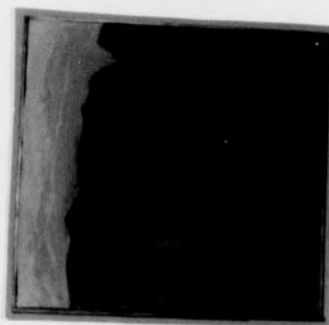


Figure 8

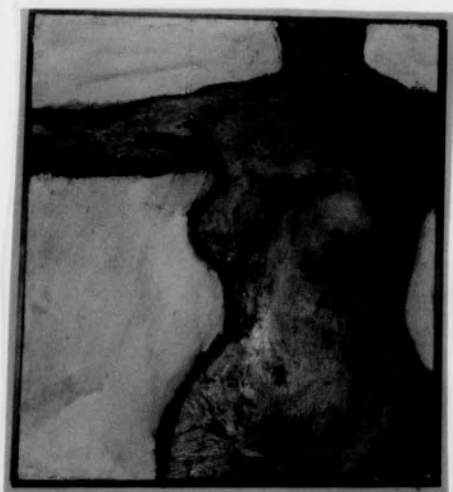


Figure 9



Figure 10